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## ABSTRACT

Guidelines and helpful suggestions are presented for publishing journal articles and for presenting papers at conferences. The successful author should begin by reviewing the scholarly journals published in the field to find the best fit for the proposed article. Following the rules of the journal makes acceptance more likely and extensive rewrites less likely. Communication is a vital aspect of dealing with an editor and is important in terms of dealing with acceptance or rejection. Presenting a paper at a conference begins with understanding the type and level of the conference and the style of the presentation (e.g., whether it is a presentation or discussion session, a display or poster session, a symposium, a training session, or a round table discussion). As with journals, there may be rules to follow in presenting a paper. Having work submitted to ERIC is a way to share the results of one's efforts with others. Other details, such as working with a coauthor and finding sources of new ideas are reviewed. A participant activity worksheet is included. (SLD)

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Publishing Articles and Presenting Papers:  
Guidelines for Success

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Publishing Articles and Presenting Papers:  
Guidelines for Success

With these guidelines, the authors hope to encourage graduate students and others to participate in the rewarding professional activities of having journal articles published and presenting papers at conferences. These guidelines are by no means exhaustive in their coverage. Rather, they are of the practical "this is what I needed to know" and "this worked for me" variety. They are based on the accumulated experience of four educators. Two are seasoned professionals with a wealth of knowledge and experience pertaining to the dissemination of ideas. The other two are graduate students who had the good fortune to be encouraged to try their hand at joining the ranks of the published and presented and the further good luck to enjoy some success.

After a presentation of the guidelines and a question-and-answer period, the participants will be encouraged to break into groups of three or four in order to explore ways in which they may make use of the guidelines. The participant worksheets at the end of this paper may be used during this activity.

## Guidelines

### Journals

These publications serve several important purposes. They are a means for the sharing of ideas and experiences among professionals. Over time, they serve as a repository of the collective knowledge of educators. Many journals depend on their readership for the contribution of articles, book reviews, etc. As a general rule, there is no payment involved, either to or from the author, for the types of journal discussed here.

### Types of Journals

Research. These journals are primarily concerned with reporting the results of research. Often, they focus on a particular aspect of pedagogy (teacher education, for example), but they may be more general in nature. They may also focus on a particular type of research, such as quantitative or qualitative. Examples of such journals are the American Educational Research Journal and the Journal of Educational Psychology.

Practice. These journals tend to be of the "how-to-do-it" type, less concerned with formal research and more concerned with descriptions of successful practices. An example is Social Education, the official journal of the National Council for the Social Studies.

### Levels of Journals

National/international. These journals are meant to appeal to a broad readership. They are the type usually found in a university library, and their readership may be limited only by the language of publication.

Regional. These journals may be limited in terms of distribution. An example is Research in the Schools, the journal of the Mid-South Educational Research Association.

### Refereed and Nonrefereed

These terms refer to the manner in which an article is evaluated for publication. As a general rule, the more respected journals employ experienced professionals as referees to judge an article. There will usually be more than one referee, and they usually read the article "blind"; that is, they do not know who the author is.

### "You Pay" Journals

This type of journal provides another sort of outlet for authors, but requires the authors to share in meeting publication costs.

### Type of Contribution

Journals primarily publish articles, but some also print book reviews and other types of contributions. You should review a number of journals in order to become familiar with their variety of contents.

### Selecting a Journal

The successful author is likely to begin by reviewing the journals currently published. The search is for the type and level of journal most likely to accept the author's manuscript. In many instances, more than one journal will initially seem appropriate. The author must then, with at least a rough draft of the proposed article in hand, more closely consider these journals. Only by actually reading (or at least scanning) several articles in several journals can the author find the "best fit." Time spent at this stage will be time saved later, when the author (hopefully) submits the finished manuscript to the journal most likely to accept it. There is still no guarantee of acceptance, but at least the highly unlikely choices will have been eliminated.

### Following the Rules

All journals have rather specific rules about article length, format, and content. Usually, these rules are spelled out in one or more issues of the journal. Following these rules makes acceptance more likely and extensive rewrites less likely.

### Dealing With Journal Editors

Communications are a vital aspect of dealing with an editor. Don't be shy about calling one. It won't be easy, because they are busy people. However, a few minutes of conversation can provide insight into such matters as the types of articles they would especially like to have, if a resubmission would be appreciated, how long a publication delay is anticipated, and a host of other issues of concern to the author. It is especially important to talk to the editor if you plan to submit something that does not follow the publications' guidelines; never assume flexibility.

#### Acceptance

Re-writes/corrections. The editor will often (if not invariably) ask for some changes. These requests normally must be complied with; object only if you feel you absolutely must, and remember that the editor probably has far more experience than you. Also, make only the changes requested by the editor; unrequested changes may result in another review cycle followed by a new set of change requests. Another option, of course, is to request return of the article, then submit it to another journal. You may do so, but don't be surprised if the second journal asks for changes very similar to those requested by the first.

"Send us a disk." Be prepared for this request.

Write on a word processor, and use a popular, main-stream program such as Word Perfect.

### Rejection

Why? Quickly get past your disappointment and determine why your submission was rejected. Often, the editor will provide you with editor and/or referee comments. These can be very useful, so resist the urge to treat them as insults. If the editor does not provide comments, then ask for them. Even a simple checklist can inform you of others' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of your work.

Fix it and submit it again. If you still feel that your work is of value (you probably do), then make a decision: submit it to another journal as-is, or rewrite it and then resubmit it. A rewrite effort can be greatly aided by the comments that resulted from the first submission.

### Delays

Held for later reconsideration. An editor may inform you that your work cannot be used in the next issue, but may be used in a future issue. You may thus have the option of leaving your work with the same publication for reconsideration. This situation also requires a judgement



on your part, and your decision may be swayed by the degree to which you feel that the editor will continue to actively and fairly consider your article for publication. Asking colleagues about their experience with this particular journal may be helpful.

Unspecified publication date. In this instance, your article has been accepted for publication, but the editor cannot specify when. Most authors will find this acceptable, up to a limit. Once a manuscript has been accepted for publication, it may be cited as "in press" in the accepting journal.

### Conferences

Professionals often congregate, to share ideas and to enjoy each others' company. As with journals, the proceedings of many of these conferences become, over time, a repository of collective knowledge.

#### Types of Conferences

Research. These meetings are primarily concerned with research methodology and results. The conferees participate as presenters and as audience members. An example is the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Subject matter (math, social science, etc.). These meetings are more focused on issues of practice: methods of instruction, curriculum development, etc. Here also, the conferees participate as presenters and as audience members. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is an example of such an organization.

Professional/honorary. These organizations hold national/international meetings to address issues and conduct the business of the organization. Their sessions are often conducted in the form of addresses by authorities on a particular issue. Examples of such organizations include Phi Delta Kappa and Kappa Delta Pi. Attendees are often representatives of local chapters of the organization.

#### Levels of Conferences

National/international. These conferences are usually conducted by organizations that seek to attract a national or an international membership and participation. Some examples are the American Educational Research Association and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Their meetings are often held in geographically diverse locations: New Orleans one year, San Francisco the next.

Regional. Organizations, such as the Mid-South Educational Research Association, that conduct their activities on a regional scale.

State. Organizations, such as the Alabama Council of Teachers of Mathematics or the Louisiana Educational Research Association, that conduct their activities primarily on a state-wide level.

Local. Often, these are local chapters of a national, regional, or state organization.

#### Styles of Conference Presentations

Presentation/discussion sessions. Typically, these sessions include brief presentations of papers by one or more authors, followed by an opportunity for audience questions. Such sessions are usually presided over by a facilitator. When there is more than one presenter, the session will probably be organized around some commonality among the papers being presented.

Display/poster sessions. This increasingly popular format entails the location of a number of presenters in one large area. Each presenter sets up a display of his or her work (the "poster") and is prepared to answer questions and provide copies of a paper on the subject. The audience moves freely from display to display. One purpose of this format is to provide professional exposure for as large a

number of presenters as possible. Another purpose is to allow audience flexibility in terms of the number of works visited and the amount of time spent with each.

Symposia. This format allows for the extended presentation of a single topic. A symposium may include several papers. Typically, this format requires extensive pre-conference collaboration by the presenters.

Training sessions. These sessions are designed to provide some sort of training for the attendees. These sessions may include presentations, question-and-answer periods, and participant activities. The trainers usually provide any necessary training materials.

Round table discussions. These sessions provide an opportunity for maximum interaction between the presenters and the attendees. Instead of a formal, didactic presentation, each presenter is joined by the attendees around a table to discuss the research or topic being presented.

#### Number of Presenters

Often, this is dictated by the format to be employed. However, caution should be exercised. Too many presenters, each with only a few minutes to say his or her piece, can be confusing, distracting, and inefficient. If a paper must be presented in 10 minutes, do not require the

audience to adjust to more than one speaker's style and mannerisms; avoid the urge to cram in all the co-authors for their moment of glory. After all, the paper, which serves as the permanent record, should list all the co-authors deserving of inclusion.

Use of Audio-Visuals, etc.

They are often helpful, but KEEP IT SIMPLE! Do not spend your few minutes fumbling around with some complicated machine, and never assume that any machine will work the way the salesman said it would. And, make sure that the equipment you need will actually be available. Never, never assume anything.

Copies of Paper for Attendees, Submission to ERIC, etc.

Most conference organizers will require that a paper be prepared for a presentation in any the formats discussed above, and that copies be made available for those attending the session. And, it is not unusual for conferees to ask for copies of papers from sessions they did not attend, so a few extras may be useful. Also, the conference organizers will usually ask for one or more copies of your paper for submission to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and inclusion in the sponsoring organization's archives. Making lots of copies can be expensive, but distribution of your work is a

primary purpose in presenting a paper at a conference.

### Selecting a Conference

Few authors would want to submit a proposal without first taking some practical considerations into account. Among those considerations will be conference type and level, cost, and scheduling. It may be prudent for the author to be realistic about the likelihood of acceptance; a state or regional organization may be more interested in first efforts. In fact, some organizations expect or even require that an author present at a local or regional meeting of that organization before progressing to the national level. Also, nearby conferences may be more affordable in terms of both money and time.

### Following the Rules

As with journals, there will be rules to follow when proposing and when presenting a paper. There will be requirements pertaining to length, format, and content. There is also the issue of membership to consider. Presenters are not always required to be members of the sponsoring organization, but membership is usually encouraged. In any event, actually belonging to the organization is a good way to ensure receipt of calls for papers and conference proceedings. Membership also provides networking opportunities. Some organizations that

sponsor meetings with presentations also publish journals, affording their members with opportunities for both types of exposure.

### Submitting to ERIC

Having your work listed by ERIC is a major way of sharing the results of your efforts with others.

#### Published Articles and Presented Papers

Journal publishers and conference organizers usually submit their articles and papers to ERIC. It can be a slow process, taking up to a year.

#### Materials Submitted Directly by the Author(s)

Authors may submit their work directly to ERIC if the journal/conference does not submit it. Also, works that were NOT published or presented may be submitted directly to ERIC; this is an excellent way to ensure that your work becomes a part of the body of literature on your subject.

### Choice of Author(s) for Articles and Papers

#### Working With a Mentor

Often, graduate students or others with little experience in getting published or presented will join a more experienced person in authoring an article or a paper.

This teamwork may help to ensure success and can also help to maintain one's professional network.

#### Working With a Colleague

Co-authorship can be effective and rewarding, but it must be approached realistically. It is entirely possible that several individuals can contribute a valuable part to an article or paper, and you may find that team membership is an effective way of avoiding procrastination. However, the nature of the collaboration must be carefully planned. Here are some important questions to be answered: Who will be the lead author and why? How will the nature and amount of each contribution be decided? Can each author accept the reality of having his or her work edited by another author? In the case of a conference paper, how will presentation be handled?

#### On Your Own (With a Little Help from Your Friends)

Very few articles or papers are truly solo efforts. If others make a significant contribution to an effort, then they should be listed as co-authors. Organizations such as the American Educational Research Association have codes of ethics addressing such issues. However, solo often makes good sense. It is probably easier to organize than a collaboration, and may better suit individual purposes. Even so, a proof-reader who will render a valid



and candid opinion can be most useful.

### Sources of Ideas

What should you write about? What should you propose for presentation? The difficulty in answering these questions may constitute the single biggest barrier to the prospective writer or presenter. Successful authors often begin by reviewing the literature in their field, looking for gaps or missing pieces of the puzzle. Your work may provide the missing link. It should help to remember that articles and papers are opportunities for sharing; if you have learned something interesting, if you do something well, then you have something worthy of being published or presented. Chances are, you have more than one good article or paper in you.

### Student Research

Often, you need to look no further than your own student papers, thesis, or dissertation. Many of these products represent serious and competent efforts and can serve as the foundation for an article or paper (or both). The fact that they may have aged a bit does not render them useless; some good ideas age well or can be updated. Most such work was done under the guidance of a professor or committee member, someone who may render a dependable opinion on the viability of your plan for publication or

presentation. Is it good enough? How should it be changed? To whom should you submit it? Do you need your mentor as a co-author? If your mentor (or someone else) made a major contribution to the work, then they should probably be included.

### Experience

Some of the best articles and presentations are based on individual experience. Your successful way of teaching, the things you have learned about the way students think, the applicability of the latest theory, anything you want to share should be considered. Your orientation may be toward research or practice or some combination of the two.

### "I've Often Wondered"

The exercise of curiosity can lead to an outstanding article or presentation. The possibilities presented by the human desire to know are truly limitless. Of course, publication and presentation require more than curiosity; success is as much a function of perspiration as it is of inspiration. Still, the germ of an idea provides the most important infection.

### Participant Activity Worksheet

1. Think for a minute or two. What sort of publication and/or presentation activity would you like to be involved in? You may be general or specific, and you may list more than one goal.

GOALS:

2. Listen to the presentations and ask questions. Note guidelines that seem to pertain to your goals.

NOTES:

3. Work within your group to plan your publication and/or presentation efforts. You may plan individual or joint efforts. You are encouraged to ask the trainers for assistance. You may describe your completed plans to the trainers and other participants, as time permits.

PLAN: